

Listing of Claims:

This Listing of Claims replaces all previous versions of the claims.

Claims 1-38. (Canceled).

39. (New) A method, comprising:

receiving a broadcast video signal at a user apparatus;

receiving text communications from at least one multimedia apparatus;

displaying television programming of said broadcast video signal in a first display area of said user apparatus;

determining a theme of the displayed television programming;

selecting a background image based on said theme;

displaying said background image as a background in a second display area of said user apparatus, said displayed background image having a plurality of displayed graphical elements;

displaying in said second display area, simultaneously with the displayed television programming, a first group of at least one avatar images representing a first group of the other multimedia apparatuses that are tuned to said television programming; and

superimposing text of said text communications on said background image in said second display area close to said at least one displayed avatar image representing a participant that made said text communication.

40. (New) The method of claim 39, wherein said text remains displayed superimposed on top of said background close to said at least one avatar image until another text communication is received from the participant.

41. (New) The method of claim 39, wherein displaying the first group of the at least one avatar images comprises:

displaying in said second display area, simultaneously with the displayed television programming, a second group of at least one avatar images representing a second group of the other multimedia apparatuses at least some of which are tuned to a different television programming than said television programming.

42. (New) The method of claim 39, further comprising:

selecting one of the avatar images of the first or second group; and
displaying, simultaneously with said text, said selected avatar image superimposed on top of said background in said second display area.

43. (New) The method of claim 39, wherein selecting the background image and displaying said background image are both performed at least two times during the broadcast of said television programming.

44. (New) The method of claim 39, wherein selecting includes selecting said background image from an image database residing in a memory device associated with said user apparatus.

45. (New) The method of claim 39, wherein selecting includes selecting said background image from an image database residing on the Internet.

46. (New) The method of claim 39, further comprising downloading an image database via a multiplexed broadcast stream containing said broadcast video signal, wherein selecting includes selecting said background image from said image database.

47. (New) The method of claim 39, further comprising:

receiving at the user multimedia apparatus an indication of an action input to one of the other multimedia apparatuses that is represented by the selected one of the avatar images;
in response to the indication, selecting an action image corresponding to said action input; and

displaying said action image superimposed on top of said background in said second display area.

48. (New) The method of claim 39, further comprising:

- receiving an indication of an action input to one of the other multimedia apparatuses that is represented by the selected one of the avatar images;
- in response to the indication, selecting an action image corresponding to said action input; and
- displaying said action image superimposed on top of said television programming in said first display area.

49. (New) The method of claim 48, wherein displaying said action image includes transparently superimposing said action image over said television programming.

50. (New) An apparatus comprising a processor and memory storing executable instructions that when executed cause the apparatus to perform at least the following;

- control receiving of a broadcast video signal at the apparatus;
- control receiving of text communications from at least one multimedia apparatus;
- control displaying of television programming of said broadcast video signal in a first display area of said apparatus;
- determine a theme of the displayed television programming;
- select a background image based on said theme;
- control display of said background image as a background in a second display area of said apparatus;
- control display in said second display area, simultaneously with the displayed television programming, a first group of at least one avatar images representing a first group of the other multimedia apparatuses that are tuned to said television programming; and
- control superimposing of text of said text communications on said background image in said second display area close to the said at least one displayed avatar image representing a participant that made said text communication.

51. (New) The apparatus of claim 50, wherein said text remains displayed superimposed on top of said background close to said at least one avatar image until another text communication is received from the participant.

52. (New) The apparatus of claim 50, wherein the apparatus is configured to control displaying of the first group of the at least one avatar images, and further configured to control displaying of, in said second display area, simultaneously with the displayed television programming, a second group of at least one avatar images representing a second group of the other multimedia apparatuses at least some of which are tuned to a different television programming than said television programming.

53. (New) The apparatus of claim 50, wherein the apparatus is further configured to: select one of the avatar images of the first or second group; and control displaying of, simultaneously with said text, said selected avatar image superimposed on top of said background in said second display area.

54. (New) The apparatus of claim 50, wherein the apparatus is further configured to select the background image and control displaying of said background image are both performed at least two times during the broadcast of said television programming.

55. (New) The apparatus of claim 50, wherein the apparatus is further configured to select said background image from an image database residing in a memory device associated with said apparatus.

56. (New) The apparatus of claim 50, wherein the apparatus is further configured to select said background image from an image database residing on the Internet.

57. (New) The method of claim 50, wherein the apparatus is further configured to download an image database via a multiplexed broadcast stream containing said broadcast video signal, wherein selecting includes selecting said background image from said image database.

58. (New) The apparatus of claim 50, wherein the apparatus is further configured to: control receiving at said apparatus an indication of an action input to one of the other multimedia apparatuses that is represented by the selected one of the avatar images; in response to the indication, select an action image corresponding to said action input; and control displaying of said action image superimposed on top of said background in said second display area.

59. (New) The apparatus of claim 50, wherein the apparatus is further configured to: control receiving of an indication of an action input to one of the other multimedia apparatuses that is represented by the selected one of the avatar images; in response to the indication, select an action image corresponding to said action input; and control display of said action image superimposed on top of said television programming in said first display area.

60. (New) The apparatus of claim 59, wherein the apparatus is further configured to control transparently superimposing of said action image over said television programming.

61. (New) A machine-readable medium storing machine-executable instructions for causing an apparatus to perform at least the following:
receiving a broadcast video signal at a user apparatus;
receiving text communications from at least one multimedia apparatuses;
displaying television programming of said broadcast video signal in a first display area of said user apparatus;
determining a theme of the displayed television programming;

selecting a background image based on said theme;
displaying said background image as a background in a second display area of said user apparatus, said displayed background image having a plurality of displayed graphical elements;

displaying in said second display area, simultaneously with the displayed television programming, a first group of at least one avatar images representing a first group of the other multimedia apparatuses that are tuned to said television programming; and

superimposing text of said text communications on said background image in said second display area close to said at least one displayed avatar image representing a participant that made said text communication.

62. (New) The machine-readable medium of claim 61, wherein the machine-executable instructions are further for causing the apparatus to perform such that said text remains displayed superimposed on top of said background close to said at least one avatar image until another text communication is received from the participant.